



International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)

ISSN 2307-4531
(Print & Online)

<http://gssrr.org/index.php?journal=JournalOfBasicAndApplied>



Jallaluddin: Neither ‘Mohammad’ nor ‘Akbar’

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Abstract

India has witnessed a number of invasions from the west attracted to the wealth, India then possessed. Besides sacking India of her wealth and multiplying the miseries by destruction of property, the invaders who stayed committed grave atrocities against the ingenious Indians and few stayed back and made a history of tyrannical rule with their dynastic successions. Among those who stayed, one of them was ‘benevolent’ and ‘great’ at least as described by V.A.Smith.

Akbar’s ancestors established the Mughal dynasty on the foundations of barbarism. Aurangzeb has earned synonyms of cruelty due to his vicious and fanatic acts. Babur misused ‘jehad’ for his own cause which was not at least religious. Humayun, the son of Babar, was even more degenerate and cruel than his father. Humayun captured his elder brother Kamran and tortured him brutal. Humayun’s servant Jauhar gave a brief account for the same. V.A.Smith remarked “Humayun had little concerns for his brother’s sufferings”.

Keywords Atrocities; Benevolent; Morality; ‘Once established’ History; Sabat

1. Introduction

Being a student of history I was always fascinated towards Mughal Empire. The saga of the rivalry and conflict, strife and intrigues created great interest. But what drew my attention was ‘The great’ tag imposed on Akbar. Like most things in life the value of greatness an individual places in another is subjective.

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Some historians consider Akbar as great, others did not. It is important that those who make such judgments learn about the subject of their subjective judgment using authentic sources of information, so they are telling the truth rather than acting from a position of ignorance. After careful and critical analysis I came to a conclusion that it was actually a grave intentional mistake done by the early historians. Grave because there are many instances contradicting it and intentional because may be the early historians tried to create an image of a secular and tolerant monarch in front of the colonial historians. The philosophical and religious views expressed by Abdul Latif, Akbar's teacher and his advisor Abu'l Fazl are no doubt extraordinary but side by side they also reveal the true face of Akbar. It is very important for the historians to present a clear picture of history before the readers and leave it on the readers to decide if some monarch is 'Great' or 'Tyrannical'. In this research I have presented some facts which were hidden from the mainstream history which once unearthed will clearly prove that Akbar was actually none less than his cruel ancestors and predecessors. If he was actually great why did he took the title of 'Ghazi-The infidel slayer' after second battle of Panipat in 1556? Being less cruel doesn't mean that its 'Great'.

2. Structure

India has witnessed a number of invasions from the west attracted to the wealth, India then possessed. Besides sacking India of her wealth and multiplying the miseries by destruction of property, the invaders who stayed committed grave atrocities against the ingenious Indians and few stayed back and made a history of tyrannical rule with their dynastic successions. Among those who stayed, one of them was 'benevolent' and 'great' at least as described by V.A.Smith.

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The word "Muhammad" is derived from the Arabic root word "hamd" meaning "praise" and 'Akbar' means 'Great'. Prophet Muhammad was a messenger of God (Allah) and spread peace and brotherhood in a barbaric society but the Mughal emperor Jallauddin (1556-1605 AD) was neither Muhammad nor Akbar.

Whatever is taught in the Indian History books is actually written by the historians of colonial mindset who had a prejudiced habit of praising everything which was thrust in India, so what is taught as history has been deliberately written to promote some ideology. Colonial historians claim that Akbar was far more generous in his dealings with Hindus than the other Mughal and Islamic rulers in India. Up to a certain extent its true but it's

more important to analyze that the greatness conferred on Akbar is due to his comparisons with barbaric Mughals like Babur, Humayun, Jahangir and Aurangzeb or the great Indian Monarchs like Chandragupta Maurya, Harshvardhana and many more. Akbar was not great but he was 'less cruel' and 'less barbaric'.

Contemporary historian of Akbar, Monserrate has written, "the religious zeal of the Musalmans has destroyed all the idol temples which used to be numerous. In place of Hindu temples, countless tombs and little shrines of wicked and worthless Musalmans have been erected in which these men are worshipped with vain superstition as though they were saints. Not only did the Muslims destroy the idols, but usurped the existing temples and converted them into tombs of insignificant people." [2].

After victory in the battle of Panipat and showing the world his cruelty in the battlefield he marched straight into Delhi. In accordance with the invaders custom of the times, a tower of skulls of the slain Indian soldiers was built. Immense treasures were taken away from the family of Hemu and his aged father was executed. "Akbar exasperated by the obstinate resistance offered to his arms treated the town and garrison with merciless severity. The 8000 strong Rajput garrison having been zealously helped during the siege by 40,000 peasants, the emperor ordered a general massacre which resulted in the death of 30,000 (after war was over). Many were made prisoners."

Even after centuries of Islamic occupation of India, Rajasthan was still almost entirely Hindu. Akbar knew well the bravery and patriotism of Rajputs. He did not dare to attack and face the Rajputs face to face so he shrewdly followed the policy of matrimonial alliances. Few of the power hungry Rajputs were lured to have such alliances resulting in capture of various forts on the eastern Rajputana. Rana of Mewar proudly refused any alliance with Mughals. Akbar's army started a campaign for Chittor in 1567. Rana of Mewar, Uday Singh left his capital in the hands of his commander Jai Mal and 8,000 'ready to die' Rajputs took himself and his family to the safety of the hills. Akbar arrived and laid a siege of Chittor. Akbar planned to overcome the fort by building a 'sabat', a structure which provides the invading army a cover of a high wall as it progresses slowly towards the fort wall and tightens the noose around the fort. The digging of trenches proved disastrous since an explosion killed nearly 200 men including some leading nobles. As the noose of 'sabat' tightened, Akbar forces lost nearly 200 men a day to musket fire from the fort. Almost four months after the siege, in February, 1567, a musket shot fired from the Mughal army killed Jai Mal. The death of their leader Jai Mal failed to dishearten the Rajput soldiers. But taking precautionary measures of saving their dignity hundreds of women performed 'Jouhar' [3].

Next day the Rajputs organized for the final war under a new young leader Patta Singh wearing Kesariya. In preparation for a fight to death, the gates of the fort were opened and the Rajput soldiers attacked the Mughal army. Patta Singh and many Rajput warriors were killed in the battle saving the honour of their motherland. Later, the victorious Mughal army entered the fort of Chittor. According to the chroniclers there were about 50,000 Hindu peasants and artisans residing on the fort besides the Rajput army. Akbar 'the great' showed his greatness by ordering complete massacre of the unarmed and innocent peasants. Some of the artisans were made

slave s to work under Mughals. Akbar was particular to massacre the thousand musketeers who had done much damage to his troops, but they escaped.

The genocide of 40,000 innocent Hindus by Akbar has left an indelible blot on his name. Even the brutal Ala-ud-din Khilji who had captured the fort in 1303 AD has not shown such brutality. Abul Fazl, Akbar's court chronicler is at pains in trying to justify this slaughter. In the later period of his rule when Akbar was criticized for his brutality, he tried to win hearts by establishing statues of Patta and Jai Mal, riding on elephants at the gate of his imperial palace at Agra. The subaltern historians believe that probably Akbar's decision was not a compliment for their heroism but it was the other way out [4]. History says it all; Jai Chand had placed a similar statue of Prithviraj Chauhan at the gate of his palace (as a Dwarpal) at the Swayamvar of his daughter Sanyogita. An imperialistic and brutal Akbar may had the same feeling [5].

In 1556, second battle of Panipat, an arrow changed the fortune of India. Hemu was hit in the eye which made him unconscious and he fell down from his elephant. The soldiers saw Hemu's elephant without him on top and this was enough to make his army surrender. The battle came to an unexpected end and Hemu was brought before Akbar. Bairam Khan, The mentor of Akbar told him to slay the infidel and earn the Islamic holy title of 'Ghazi'. Akbar chopped off the head of unarmed and hands tied Hemu, truly not an act expected from a 'great' king. However some of the historians claim that it was not Akbar who killed Hemu but he just touched the infidel's head with his sword and Bairam Khan did the 'holy' work. After the war was over started the slaughter of ignorant people and captured soldiers. As per the custom of his ancestors a 'minar' of skulls was built in the heart of the city. An Englishman travelling Mughal empire some 75 years later (during Jahangir and Shahjahan), Peter Mundy found such towers were still being built. An illustration by Peter Mundy clearly represents the tower of heads during Akbar's reign. Hemu's father was executed on refusal of accepting Islam [6].

The greatness imposed on Akbar is an insult of many great rulers of India. Prithviraj Chauhan defeated Mohammed Ghori several times but never did he massacre the defeated army. On contrary when Pritviraj Chauhan was defeated in the second battle of Tarain, 1192, Ghori blinded him and carried him to Afganistan in chains where he received a cruel execution [7]. The Mughals were the descendents of the same brutal Mongol Chengiz Khan and the Turk Timur Lane so it was natural for them to follow the same inhumane customs and misinterpreted Islamic ideals. His proceedings were much the same as those of other ambitious and ruthless kings. Akbar was actually not 'Akbar'.

Abul Fazl has given a vivid description of an incident which happened at Thaneswar. It was a place of pilgrimage for the Hindus and different sects of Hinduism assembled there and occupied their traditionally allotted places to collect alms from the pilgrims. Among several Hindu sanyasis who assembled at the holy tank, two of the parties were Kuris and Puris. The Puris complained the king that the Kuris had unjustly occupied their accustomed sitting place. After failure of peaceful negotiations both were permitted to resolve the dispute by combat. Surprisingly Akbar gave the permission at a holy place. Fight began with swords, followed by bows and arrows. Akbar was enjoying the fight that to at a place which was a symbol of peace and harmony. Soon the Puris were outnumbered and Akbar gave the signal to some of his more savage followers to help the weaker

party. The unexpected reinforcement enabled the Puris to drive the Kuris away leaving most of them dead. Few of the royal soldiers were also killed. Although the numbers of dead were few but such a barbaric act at a religious place was not welcome [8].

Abul Fazl quotes 'the holy heart, which is the colorists of destiny's worship, was highly delighted with this sport. The Emperor greatly enjoyed the sight.' [9]. How can any king who encouraged such a sport and even sacrificed the lives of his own soldiers who had no interest in the quarrel, be 'great'?

Akbar's respect for the women can be questioned by many of the incidents in his life in which he was actually cruel in treating them. The best example is of Rani Durgawati of Gondawana. Akbar did not hesitate to take action against the Rani who had maintained her dignity in spite of her setbacks in life. Her only mistake was that she refused to accept the suzerainty of a ruthless and imperialistic Mughal. She left a mark on history by putting up a gallant defense with her inadequate forces. On sighting her defeat she chose death rather than dishonor and stabbed herself to death. In fact she was 'great', great enough not to interfere in the affairs of other states as done by the Mughals and also great to die for her motherland than to bow down before a despotic fanatic Akbar [10].

Abul Fazl has also described about an incident of Akbar's drinking habit which happened near Surat. As per Abul Fazl's records one night there was a drinking party. Rajput kings were also there and soon the friendly talks on incidents and examples of bravery of Rajputs was mistaken by the drunken Akbar as disregard for the 'great' Mughals [11]. It was said that two Rajput rivals would run from opposite sides against the points of a double headed spear held by third party, so that the points would transfix both of the rivals and come out at their backs. Akbar, already high announced to the horror of his fellow drinkers that he could do the same with his sword. He fixed the hilt of sword into the wall and ran to transfix himself by rushing against the point when Raja Man Singh kicked down the sword, and in doing so cut his sovereign's hand. Akbar in rage knocked down Man Singh and squeezed him hard. It is said that one Sajaad Muzaffar risked his life to press Akbar's injured finger in order to make him loosen his hold on the throat of Man Singh, whom he would have choked in his rage [12]. No doubt Akbar must have been completely drunk. It is certain that he kept up the family tradition and often drank more than he could carry. The affair was recorded in the manuscripts but did not come in sight or was deliberately overlooked by the colonial historians who tried to prove Akbar as 'great'.

3. Results

Akbar ruled and died as a tyrannical monarch although a bit less than his forefathers. Akbar was a fundamental and eclectic. In the beginning only he realized that in order to establish the Mughal rule in Hindustan he has to win the confidence of the ethnic people. He did so by all means. He used force and unmatched cruelty to defeat Rajputana and even did not spare a female monarch (Rani Durgawati). Few rulers who bowed down were very efficiently used by Akbar to create his own image of a tolerant ruler. This is why he projected himself to rule in strict neutrality. He did not require his wives or followers to join Islam only to safeguard his position. This was a politically motivated step and nothing to do with his so projected secular and tolerant ruler. If this would have been so then he would not have been so cruel and unethical in treating Rana Pratap or Rani Durgawati or even

his own son Salim. Upon victory, Akbar issued Fathnama-i-Chitor [13]. He began this letter with praise for Allah, and quoted several verses of the Quran leaving no doubt that he derived his inspiration from the Quran and that he viewed himself as a jihadi annihilating the infidel Rajputs. He declared that-

in conformity with the happy injunction of the Quran (27:40)...[he was busy] in subjugating the localities, habitations, forts and towns which are under the possession of the infidels...may God forsake and annihilate all of them, and thus raising the standard of Islam everywhere and removing the darkness of polytheism and violent sins by the use of sword. We destroy the places of worship of idols in those places and other parts of India. The praise be to Allah, who hath guided us to this, and we would not have found the way had it not been that Allah had guided us.... in accordance with the imperative Command - and kill the idolaters all together (Quran 9:36)

Those defiant ones who were still offering resistance having formed themselves into knots of two to three hundred persons, were put to death and their women and children taken prisoners. Is this which can be called greatness or secular or tolerant?

Akbar's rule like other Muslim rulers also saw the destruction of many temples and the killing of their inhabitants and cows and the looting of their wealth. Temples were frequently converted into mosques and madrasas or simply destroyed. Sometimes these activities were not done under direct command by Akbar but by his commanders and officers. I strongly disagree with the historical blunder that Akbar was 'Great'. He was just another cruel and tyrannical Mughal ruler.

4. Conclusion

Akbar's life has been full of cruelties and barbarism. Akbar was no better than his forefathers. Akbar has been given unnecessary credit of being tolerant and secular king. His courtiers, including the court chroniclers, showered on him all the praises he desired. Buildings and mansions can't be the only parameter to judge the greatness of a king or empire. He was just like other monarchs, constantly on the prey to usurp power by whatever means they could. Morality and humanitarian principles were something completely missing in his reign as it was in the reign of his ancestors and generations to come. Even after so many autocracies if Akbar had been referred to as noble, compassionate and great, then it only reflects that colonial mindset which did not leave any stone unturned to show down India's glorified past. Akbar can never be termed as a secular and broadminded. No doubt he tried his level best to accommodate all religions in his reign but it was only a show off to win confidence of the people. It's a grave blunder done by the early historians in reconstructing and writing accounts on Indian history. The blunder got multiplied with the later historians just following the 'once established' history. Jallaluddin Mohammad Akbar was neither 'Mohammad' nor 'Akbar'. Thanks to the subaltern historians and modern research that Akbar's true nature and personality is exposed to the world.

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